

HOME MISSION LESSON.

ISSUED BY THE

WOMEN'S BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETY.

PREPARED BY

MARY G. BURDETTE, Corresponding Secretary, 2411 Indiana Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Lesson VI. Mormonism — Its Origin, Nature, and Development.

I. What in the United States is a synonym for Mormonism, and what can you say of its size, population, and resources?

The Territory of Utah, which is almost as large as the four Middle States, contained in 1900 276,749 inhabitants. Its mountains are richly stored with precious metals, and its valleys are among the richest in our country.

II. What city is the seat of government, and how has it been briefly described?

Salt Lake City, the seat of government, lies eighteen miles from the Great Salt Lake, and is beautifully laid out, the broad streets running at right angles. Indeed, "the city lieth four square," and "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem," so are the mountains round about Salt Lake City. The inhabitants number more than 53,000. There are a number of fine public and private buildings, and many miles of street railway. The city is lighted by electricity, and rejoices in the advantage of the telephone. The most noted buildings are the Endowment House, Assembly Hall, the Tabernacle, and the new Temple, forty years in building, and surrounded by the mystery which superstition leaves. It is a remarkable achievement, and cost more than \$3,000,000. The Tabernacle is outwardly an architectural monstrosity, but its internal arrangements are complete, and its acoustic properties perfect. It is said to seat 10,000 people.

III. When and where was the Mormon Church organized?

April, 1830, in Manchester, N. Y.

IV. Who are especially distinguished as being its founders?

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon.

V. What do you know of Sidney Rigdon's previous history?

Sidney Rigdon was raised on a farm in Pennsylvania about twelve miles from Pittsburg. He united with the Baptist Church, and was ordained to preach while a young man, but his preaching soon became so flagrantly erroneous in doctrine that he was deposed from the ministry and excluded from membership in the Baptist denomination.

VI. What was his leading error?

His leading error was that of baptismal regeneration. All others followed in the train of this one. Among other doctrines, he advocated the restoration of the ancient order of things, and made prominent

the bringing by church members of all they possessed and "laving their goods down at the apostle's feet."

VII. What discovery finally led to the development of the new religion?

It is said that the manuscript of a religious novel, written by a clergyman named Spaulding, to while away the tedious hours of invalidism, came to the notice of Sidney Rigdon, and its peculiar character and title, "The Lost Manuscript," led him to conceive the idea of founding a new religion, based on pretended revelations. He accordingly set to work to revise this manuscript, and so adapt it to his purpose as to warrant its acceptance as the "Bible" of the new faith.

VIII. How came Joseph Smith to be identified with the scheme?

In order to insure the successful carrying out of his plans, so the story goes, Rigdon required the services of one even bolder in sin and more cunning in the art of deception than himself, and such an one he found in Joseph Smith.

IX. What use did Sidney Rigdon make of the peculiar talents of this prince of deceivers?

Leaving Pittsburg, Rigdon joined Smith at Manchester, N. Y., where their mysterious conduct, with that of several others whom they had associated with them, attracted the attention of the people, who could only account for their strange maneuvers on the supposition that they were seeking for buried treasure. By and by, Smith having hidden himself for a few weeks, came forth, solemnly declaring that he had received revelations from Heaven investing him with a great mission, and directing him, as the initial step, to go to a certain hill at midnight, and dig until he should find a set of golden plates written over with curious characters; with the plates he would also find a wonderful pair of spectacles, by the aid of which he would be able to read what was written on the plates. These plates, which he was to guard jealously from the sight of all other mortals, he was commissioned to transcribe and publish.

The fact was soon proclaimed that the golden plates, engraved with strange characters, had been found in the hill Moreh. Smith alone, it was asserted, was permitted to see them, and having translated them by the aid of the magic spectacles, they instantly vanished.

X. What name was given to this pretended translation, and what was claimed to be the origin of the plates?

It was called the "Golden Bible," or "Book of Mormon." One portion of it claimed to be the history of the first settlers in America. These settlers, it is asserted, came from the Tower of Babel, and were a very warlike race. They fought until all were killed. Then, six hundred years before Christ, another colony came direct from Jerusalem, and settled there. These were said to be the ancestors of the American Indians, and were spoken of as the "bad Hebrews." About the year 400 of the Christian era, the Almighty raised up from this people a prophet by the name of Mormon, and commanded him to write their history, with various prophecies relating to the "last days" and hide it in the earth. This is the book of Mormon, and it is claimed to be a supplement of the Bible, and of equal authority.

XI. What practical difficulty now confronted the pioneers of Mormonism?

The manuscripts of the new Bible having been thus duly transcribed, the revisers found themselves without money to print it. But among the converts to the new faith was a credulous farmer named Martin Harris, who mortgaged his farm to obtain a sum sufficient to print the precious book.

XII. What can you say of the early migrations of the Mormons?

After attempting a settlement in various places, they finally pitched upon Nauvoo, Ill., but in a trouble between the Gentiles and Mormons, in which the militia was called out, Joseph Smith was killed.

XIII. By whom was his place filled?

The place made vacant by the death of Joseph Smith was at once filled by Brigham Young, who possessed all the cunning of his predecessor, joined with large executive ability and adamant will. He soon made his influence felt throughout the whole church. The settlement at Nauvoo was abandoned, and marching across the Rocky Mountains, they finally pitched their tents in the Great Salt Lake Valley.

XIV. What can be said of their history from this time?

From this point the history of their success commences. Their organization was perfected, their doctrines more clearly defined, and they began to increase in numbers, wealth, and influence.

"Not alone in Utah," writes James H. Anderson, himself a Mormon, "do the Latter Day Saints find a home. Their settlements bedeck the mountain valleys from the province of Alberta, in Canada, through Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, in the United States, to Chihuahua in Old Mexico, on either side of a line which reaches fifteen hundred miles along the backbone of the American continent."

"As an ecclesiastical organization," he continues, "the first officers in the church are divinely commissioned apostles of the Lord Jesus, and divine authority is possessed by the whole body of the priesthood, down to the office of deacon. Almost the entire male membership of the church is included in this classification, while there are, also, organizations for the women and children. About three hundred districts, or wards, are united in larger organizations called the 'Stakes of Zion,' all combining in a perfect system."

Eugene Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, in an article in the "Outlook" for June, 1896, says: "In Mormonism every man of reasonable ability is a church official. Boys are made deacons before they are eighteen years old. They are sent on missions before they attain their majority, and in this way become elders."

XV. In what lies the real strength of Mormonism?

First—in its claim to divine inspiration for the heads of the church, arming these men with supreme power and infallible guidance.

Second—In its perfect organization. Dr. Strong says: "The Mormon church is probably the most perfect organization in the world. To look after a Mormon population of 165,218 (1890) in this country requires 31,517 officials, or more than one to every five persons. And so highly centralized is the power that all of these threads of authority are gathered into one hand, that of President Taylor. The priesthood, of which he is the head, claims the right to control in all things, religious, social, industrial, and political. Mormonism is, therefore, not simply a church, but a state, an *imperium in imperio*, ruled by a man who is a prophet, priest, king, and pope, all in one—a pope, too, who is not one whit less infallible than he who wears the tiara. And as one would naturally expect of an American pope, and especially of an enterprising Western pope, he out-popes the Roman by holding familiar conversations with the Almighty, and getting to order new revelations direct from Heaven."

The real aim of Mormonism may easily be seen in the following saying of Bishop Lunt: "Like a grain of mustard seed was the truth planted in Zion; and it is destined to spread throughout the world. Our church has been organized only fifty years, (1880), and yet behold its wealth and power! *We look forward with perfect confidence to the day when we shall control the United States government.*"

XVI. How have the Mormons gained possession of vast tracts of land in the West?

By systematic colonization. "An order is issued by the authorities that a certain district shall furnish so many hundred emigrants for Arizona or Idaho. The families are drafted, so many from a ward; and each district equips its own quota with ani-

mals, wagons, provisions, implements, seeds, and the like. Thus the Mormon president can mass voters here or there about as easily as a general can move his troops."

XVII. With what design did the Mormons secure possession of these lands?

With the design of planting in them a Mormon population sufficiently numerous to control the whole region.

XVIII. What agencies has the Mormon church employed to secure the desired population, and what can you say of Mormon growth?

The Mormon church employs a large force of missionaries, who labor in our own country and in Europe. In 1849 the perpetual immigration fund was established for the purpose of assisting converts who were too poor to reach Zion unaided.

The *Christian Advocate* published the following information: At the late general conference of the Mormon church, (1898) the statistics show that the increase in membership through baptism of children who have reached the age of eight years, and of adult converts; in Utah, Idaho, Canada, Colorado, Wyoming, and Arizona, has been larger than during any year in the church's history. Outside the Rocky Mountain region the Mormon church has received more accessions than in any two years previously. The greatest comparative increase has been in New England, in states east of the Missouri River, north of the Ohio, and in Oregon and California.

The natural increase by the family is exceedingly large. The census for 1900 gives the Mormon population of the United States as over 300,000.

XIX. How does the Mormon Church secure and send out such a large force of missionaries?

"It should be remembered," says Rev. W. R. Campbell, "that the Mormon church is an absolute monarchy, the word of the president, when he speaks by pretended revelation, being its supreme law, and that every young man in the church is trained up with the idea that he is liable to be called at any time by revelation through the president of the church, to go on a mission. To be called to serve the church as a missionary is considered an honor; and no one can refuse to go, when called, without disaster to his peace and temporal welfare; but in almost all cases the sense of honor imposed by the call and the realization of the opportunity afforded for self-advancement are all-sufficient to induce the person to go without any necessity for compulsion. At present there are about 2,000 of these missionaries at work in Europe and in our land, endeavoring to convert our Christian people to Mormonism. A prominent Mormon missionary told me recently that it was the purpose of the church to put at least two Mormon missionaries into every county in every state of the Union, and to greatly increase its missionary forces in all the cities of the country during the current year." These mis-

sionaries travel and work without salary or allowance from the church, relying for their support upon the hospitality of the people. Recently they have adopted the plan of sending out young women.

XX. In view of the erroneous beliefs and false interpretations and perversions of the Scripture, and degrading practices, how can the success of the Mormons in gaining proselytes be explained?

"It will be borne in mind that Mormonism, with all its fraud and corruption, is not all evil. There is in its doctrines enough of good with the evil to make it a masterpiece of deception. Whatever is good and true in the system is beaten very thin, and made, like charity, to cover a multitude of sins. In striving to make proselytes they refer but little to the Book of Mormon, but make artful use of the Bible, employing very ingenious and plausible ways of interpreting it. They tell of the promised land in a beautiful and secluded country; of the city of Zion, where all are saints; of the River Jordan, the great salt sea, the Temple which vies with Solomon's in glory, of apostles and elders, and priests inspired of God. They picture, also, the great wealth and the abundance of land, whose mountains are full of silver and gold. Thus thousands, especially of the poorer classes in Europe, are won to the faith, and follow these missionaries to Utah. Once there, they come under the power of the hierarchy, which they have been led to regard as in the place of God. All questions are silenced and all scruples hushed by this short logic of the church: 'To question is to doubt, and to doubt is to be damned.' Three things every Mormon must do: 'Obey the priests' (whose word is law), 'be baptized' (for remission of sins), and 'pay tithes.' Though every command of the decalogue be broken, he who observes these three things, to do them, is assured of salvation."

XXI. What can be said of polygamy as a feature of Mormonism?

Polygamy, although the most shocking and disgusting feature of this religion, is on some accounts less difficult to deal with than those to which we have referred. "Polygamy," says Dr. Strong, "is not an essential part of Mormonism; not a root, but a graft, and might be utterly destroyed without seriously weakening Mormonism. Outside of Utah there is a large growing sect of Mormons known as Josephites, which would excommunicate a member for practicing it."

It is claimed that a special revelation enjoining polygamy as a condition of salvation was received July 12, 1843.

XXII. What is the principal danger from polygamy?

The degradation of women, and consequent practical destruction of the family and social life. Many women glory in their shame, and boast of the bondage that degrades them and their children—so-

cially, morally, and intellectually. This is one of the saddest features of the system.

Woman is a mere creature, whose only hope of future life depends on her having a husband, who, as he will require her services in the future world, will, therefore, see to her resurrection. But, even when married, if she is the only wife, though she may enter heaven, yet she must forever be the servant of those who, by virtue of a polygamous marriage, shall reign there as kings and queens. Polygamy is to them a Heaven-ordained institution. The more wives a man has in this world, the greater shall be his glory in the next. The wife is enjoined to look up to her husband as to God. It is not possible for her to be saved but through him. And thus it is that Mormon women are willing to enter polygamy with all its miseries, as it is their only hope of salvation here or hereafter. The better nature of thousands of women revolt. Many bear it as a cross, which they are made to believe the Lord lays upon them. Many are women of the same mold as ourselves, with the natural delicacy and shrinking from pollution which God has put into every true woman's heart.

XXIII. What measures designed to effect the suppression of polygamy have been taken by the Government of the United States?

The first act of Congress designed to effect the suppression of polygamy was a law passed in 1862, which remained inoperative not only during the war for the Union, but for many years afterward, while the Mormon church went on gathering strength. Next came the law known as the Poland bill of 1874. This bill was practically killed by a Mormon lobby in Washington, who secured the insertion of a provision which allowed Mormons one-half the jury panel. As a result the peculiar institution of Utah remained essentially untouched. Next in order was the Edmunds bill of 1883, and the Mormon resistance on the ground of unconstitutionality. It was contended that these plural marriages had been contracted before the passage of the Edmunds bill, therefore the parties could not violate a law before it existed, and having contracted these marriages they were bound to stand by them. Last came the Edmunds-Tucker bill of 1890, with a test oath which disenfranchises every polygamist, as only registered citizens can vote, and no one can be registered until he has taken an oath to obey the laws of the United States, and particularly those forbidding polygamy.

XXIV. How was this enactment received by the Mormons?

It need occasion no surprise to any one familiar with the history of Mormonism to know that the most conspicuous feature of a convention of the saints called by the church authorities and held in Salt Lake City, was the formulating of an act making polygamy a misdemeanor punishable by a fine and imprisonment, especially as *this*

act was a plank in the constitution under which Utah purposed to apply for admission into the Union as a State.

XXV. What may be said concerning the good faith of the Mormons in the passage of the act mentioned?

There is a diversity of opinion concerning the motive of the Mormons in the promises made, pending the admission of Utah as a State, not only in reference to polygamy, but the relations of church and state, and the church and public school. Utah became a state January 6, 1896. One prominent minister in Utah, at the close of the first year of statehood, referred to it as a busy one with the Mormon leaders in their efforts to get a firm hold of the reins of church and state, and added: "Polygamy is coming out of its hiding place; while the Thatcher senatorial contest proves that no one out of favor with the Mormon church can be elected to office."

Since then there has been abundant evidence that the leaders in the Mormon hierarchy never intended to keep this promise—that it was in their intent simply a means to an end. The manifesto was not, and did not intend to be, a repudiation of the doctrine of celestial marriage. All honest Mormons confess that it was only a suspension of the *practice*. They hold the *principle* to be as eternal as God.

XXVII. By what bold step in 1893 did Utah show that Polygamy was not a dead issue?

In less than three years after admission as a state, the whole country was aroused by the announcement that the people of Utah had elected and sent to congress an open and admitted polygamist, Brigham H. Roberts. However, the righteous indignation of the American people caused him to be unseated and sent back to his Utah harem. But leaving Washington, Roberts was received in Utah as a martyr to the faith, and at once promoted to a position of greater honor in the church.

XXVIII. What was the next "test case"?

The next test case was the election in 1903 of one of the twelve apostles of the Mormon church, Reed Smoot, as United States Senator for Utah. Whether a polygamist or not, he stands before the American people as one of the highest officers in a church which demands implicit belief in the doctrine of polygamy. Furthermore, as one of the twelve apostles, he has taken an oath of allegiance to the Mormon church which, if sincere, must be above any pledge made to the United States Senate. This case is pending (March, 1905).

XXIX. What is necessary to strike the death blow at polygamy?

The passage by the congress of the United States of an anti-polygamy bill, prohibiting polygamy and polygamous cohabitation in the United States and all places subject to its jurisdiction, and providing for the disfranchisement of all those who persist in its practice.

